

Combination makes home one-of-a-kind

By CAROLYN PLOTTS

It's not any one single feature that sets Alberta Slaby's home apart — it's a combination of detail after detail that makes her home one-of-a-kind.

Mrs. Slaby's home at 905 Sun Ave., will be one of four homes on the Norton County Arts Council 2006 Homes Tour. Council memberships will be available at any of the homes.

Alberta Byrum and Roger Slaby were married Nov. 20, 1993, but actually began building their dream home a few months earlier. They moved into the house in February of 1994 and made it their home. They shared the 2,400 square foot home until Mr. Slaby's death Sept. 9, 2002.

Mrs. Slaby continues to live there and enjoys showing her home to friends and sharing the details of the building process. She used color to tie every room together. Burgundy and mauve will be found, somewhere, in every room. Another continuing theme is the use of rosettes to anchor window treatments or tie back curtains.

She said the most noteworthy thing about the house is that it was built, entirely by local craftsmen. The 15,000 Santa Fe Navajo Blue bricks were laid by Leonard and Phil Pfortmiller, a father/son team from Stuttgart. She pointed out that Mr. Pfortmiller embedded a coin somewhere by the front door. He told her it was supposed to bring good luck. The metal railings were crafted by Skrdlant Manufacturing; the windows from Norton Glass; floor coverings by Don's Floor Covering; cement from S & R Ready-Mix; appliances from Norton Appliance; window treatments by Riemann Sewing Center and plumbing by Sloan's Plumbing. Other local businesses that had a hand in the Slaby house were Bainter Brothers of Selden, Steve Cole, Garrett's, Norton Sheet Metal, Randy Bantam, Diana Montoia, Homestore and Dean and Bobbi Wiseman.

The house sits on a one acre corner lot, bordered on the north by a dense pine tree windbreak. Mrs. Slaby said it is so quiet she hardly notices traffic on US 36.

A feature Mrs. Slaby said her husband was proud of was his three-car, 1,100 square foot garage. It was a space she said, "most men would die for." Some of its features are an extra-long work bench, a pull-down ladder to a full attic, a bishop's bench with lift-up lid and lots of additional storage for her seasonal decorations.

One other feature that the house boasts is electrical outlets. Mrs. Slaby said there are plug-ins in every corner, all around the house. She quoted Ted Sanko of Garrett Plumbing Heating and Electric as saying, "There's not a house in town with the wiring this one has."

Contributing to the clean, uncluttered look of the exterior is the fact that the outside utilities like

power and telephone lines are underground. Inside, each room has an intercom system; there is a built-in vacuum system; energy efficient lighting; Eagle windows and doors; and Casablanca or Hunter fans in every room.

The house was built over a basement that mirrors the upstairs with an additional 2,400 square feet of living space. That part of the house is not on the tour.

The home was built with a working man in mind as well as a woman who loved to decorate. Mr. Slaby had a shower and sink installed in the utility room just off the garage. After a hard day's work he could clean up without tracking through the house. In addition to the standard washer and dryer, the utility room has a built-in, swivel ironing board.

The guest bedroom, guest bath and an over-sized office occupy the north wing of the house. The bedroom and bath are decorated in matching floral fabrics, wall border and coordinating wallpapers.

The heart of any home is the kitchen and Mrs. Slaby placed hers in the center of the house. Its open design looks into the great room. The kitchen is set off with white-stained cabinets trimmed in oak. It is an all electric General Electric kitchen with a breakfast bar. She said the wood floor is extremely easy to care for, requiring washing once a week with a little vinegar in the water.

Mrs. Slaby said, "The great room is where I live." The room is trimmed in oak with vaulted, beamed ceilings. She chose a multi-color berber carpet for the floor. She said there is a lot of traffic through that room, but the carpet still looks great, even after 12 years. In that room she has surrounded herself with treasured keepsakes. The large room is dominated on the west by a soaring oak paneled wall surrounding a recessed fireplace. Displayed on that wall is the well-known picture of an eagle by local wildlife photographer Bill Bussen.

Mrs. Slaby enjoys telling the story of how she came to have an area rug in the great room that looks like it was custom-made. She answered the door one day to a delivery man who told her he had a delivery. Knowing she hadn't ordered anything, she was skepti-



A sweeping vista stretches out from Alberta Slaby's deck on the east side of her home. She has one of the best views in town. — Telegram photo by Carolyn Plotts

cal but he assured her all she owed him was a \$37 delivery charge. The delivery turned out to be the rug; just the perfect color and size. To this day, she still doesn't know how or why it came to her.

The east side of the great room is made almost entirely of glass. This offers a panoramic view of the valley on the east edge of town. A door opens to the large deck where a visitor may relax in the gazebo or walk to the greenhouse. In fact, one can walk completely around the house as there are side-walks encircling the entire house. Another outdoor feature is the buffalo grass lawn. Mrs. Slaby said, "I haven't watered in nine years."

The south wing of the house includes the large master bedroom, with French doors to the deck, a large bath and walk-in closet. The bathroom features a double vanity with a center dressing table, a step-up Jacuzzi bathtub, a separate shower stall, a wall of beveled mirrors and a privacy wall around the commode. Gathered draperies on the wall behind the bed give the room a soft look.

The formal front room is anchored by two velvet settees fac-

ing bay windows on the west side of the house. Lace curtains frame the windows. Above the settees are framed tapestry pieces Mrs. Slaby brought home from Notre Dame. Occasional chairs and a Queen Anne library table complete the look.

The dining area fills the north end of the large room. The dining table can extend to seat 12 for family get-togethers. The breakfast cabinets are lighted to show off her extra special glass pieces.

Mrs. Slaby has three children; James Byrum and his wife, Deb, of Council Grove; Kristine and Von Fahrenbruch and Warren Byrum, Norton.

Other homes on the tour are the Rose of Sharon Inn where refreshments will be served, plus the homes of Corey and Gail Roy and Chuck and Kathy Zimmerman.

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